DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 419 438 HE 031 208

AUTHOR Shiarella, Ann Harris
TITLE Scale of Community Service Attitudes for College Students.
SPONS AGENCY Colorado State Univ., Ft. Collins.
PUB DATE 1998-01-00
NOTE 18p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Southwest Educational Research Association (Houston, TX, January, 1998).
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Altruism; *Attitude Measures; *College Students; *Community Services; *Helping Relationship; Higher Education; Models; Psychometrics; *Service Learning; *Student Attitudes; Student Volunteers; Test Reliability; Test Validity

ABSTRACT

This paper describes the development of a scale that measures college students' attitudes about community service, based on Schwartz' process model of altruistic helping behavior. The development of such a scale is seen as essential for research, evaluation of interventions, and the prediction of outcomes of community service participation. The model identifies eight sequential steps in four phases in a helping action: (1) activation steps (awareness of need, actions to relieve need, ability to provide help, sense of connectedness), which involve perceptions of a need to respond; (2) obligation step (empathy), or the moral obligation to respond; (3) defense steps (costs and benefits, seriousness of need and responsibility to respond), or reassessment of potential responses; and (4) response step (desire) for engagement in helping behavior. Scale development involved writing 85 survey questions; 74 on community service attitudes, six on demographics, and five on intention to engage in community service. Testing was conducted with 437 college students and was followed by reliability and validity analyses. The scale is continuing to be refined. Tables present results of the analyses done with the pilot test population. (Contains 16 references.) (DB)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

HE

ED 419 438

Scale of Community Service Attitudes for College Students

Ann Harris Shiarella
Department of Psychology
Colorado State University
Fort Collins, Colorado 80523
970-491-6002
anns@lamar.colostate.edu

Abstract: The development of a scale measuring college students' attitudes about community service, based on Schwartz' (1977) process model of helping behavior, is presented. These scales show promise for educators, researchers, and policy makers for understanding the outcomes and effects of community service experiences for students.

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Ann Harris Shiarella

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

1

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

✓ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

HE 031 208

Paper presented at the 1998 Annual Meeting of the Southwest Educational Research Association, January 1998, Houston, Texas.

I gratefully acknowledge the financial support for this research provided by the Colorado State University Chase Research Grant.

Scale of Community Service Attitudes for College Students

Increasingly, community service is being incorporated into the university setting through the integration of service-learning in college classrooms (Zlotkowski, 1996). Educators, researchers, and policy makers believe that community service can provide valuable experiences for students. In the form of service-learning, community service offers the opportunity for students to develop a variety of skills, including team building, leadership, conflict resolution, interpersonal, communication, organization, and time management (McCarthy & Tucker, 1997). In addition, it can also prepare students for adulthood and citizenship, by sensitizing them to community needs and showing them how their time and talents can make a difference in their community (Smith, 1994). Finally, community service is frequently an important part of the mission of a university, and one of the values it endeavors to instill in its students (Cohen, 1994; Markus, Howard & King, 1993).

While community service learning holds great promise for higher education classrooms, it has generally been recognized that research into the outcomes and effects of service-learning and volunteer programs is lacking (Kraft & Krug, 1994; Zlotkowski, 1996). For such research to occur, attitude instruments need to be developed that accurately measure student perceptions of community service and predict student intentions to engage in community service.

This study reports the development of an instrument to measure college students' attitudes about community service. The development of community service attitude instruments is essential in order to conduct research, evaluate interventions, and predict outcomes of community service participation. The instrument for this research was based on Schwartz' (1977) process model of altruistic helping behavior. Altruistic helping behavior describes how aware individuals are of the needs of others, and to what degree they want to help others. The model is comprised of cognitive and affective steps through which a person progresses, beginning with the perception of the existence of a need and ending with an overt response of help. In the development of this model, Schwartz (1977) described helping primarily in terms of helping in a one-time, specific situation, such as watching a stranger's parcel in a restaurant or donating blood. For the purposes of this

study, the model is recast in more general terms to apply to volunteerism, which usually is directed at helping others in a more general, often ongoing basis. The process model identifies the following sequential steps:

Phase I. Activation Steps: Perceptions of a need to respond.

1. Awareness that others are in need.
2. Perception that there are actions which could relieve the need.
3. Recognition of one's own ability to do something to provide help.
4. Feeling a sense of responsibility to become involved, based on a sense of connectedness with the community or the people in need.

Phase II. Obligation Step: Moral obligation to respond.

5. Feeling a moral obligation to help, generated through (a) personal or situational norms to help, and (b) empathy.

Phase III. Defense Steps: Reassessment of potential responses.

6. Assessment of (a) costs and (b) probable outcomes (benefits) of helping.
7. Reassessment and redefinition of the situation by denial of (a) the reality and seriousness of the need and (b) the responsibility to respond.

Phase IV. Response Step: Engage in helping behavior.

8. Desire to engage in community service or not.

Each phase influences the next phase, such that if the processes in steps 1 through 4 of Phase I have all been activated, the individual progresses to Phase II, and so on. In Phase III, if the costs of helping (e.g., time away from family, threat to one's self-image) are clearly low relative to the benefits of helping, step 7 is skipped. If step 6 generates high costs, or the evaluation the of costs and benefits are about equal, then it becomes unclear to the individual whether or not they should act to help. This creates internal conflict which leads to step 7. Finally, in Phase IV, the decision whether or not to help (e.g., to engage in community service) is made.

This study develops an instrument to measure attitudes at each step of the model. First, reliability data was gathered for attitude scales for each step of the model. Then, validity evidence was analyzed. A final version of each scale is offered for further research.

Method

Sample

The subjects were 437 college students enrolled in eight business classes at a Western university in the spring of 1997. A demographic profile is presented in Table 1. The majority of the students were between 20 and 29 years of age; slightly over half were male (56 percent). Reflective of the locality, the majority of participants were White (90 percent); the remaining ten percent reflected Hispanic, Asian, African-American, Native American, and Multi-racial heritage. Most of these students were in their junior or senior year of college. The majority were business majors (77 percent) and had previous community service experience (84 percent).

Instrument and Procedure

Eighty-five items were written for the survey: seventy-four questions on community service attitudes, six demographic questions, and five questions on intention to engage in community service or community service learning. Items fitting each step of Schwartz' (1977) model were developed by business school faculty members (McCarthy & Tucker, 1998), resulting in separate scales which correspond to each step of the process model. Intention items were written as dependent measures. Intentions are commonly used as outcome measures when actual behaviors are not measured, because intentions have been shown to strongly predict future behavior (Ajzen, 1988). The response format for all items was a 5-point Likert-type scale. The original items are shown in Table 2.

First, reliability analysis was performed on scales. The number of items was trimmed to the most homogeneous ones, and a measure of internal consistency (coefficient alpha) was calculated to assess the interrelationships of the remaining items. Then, relationships to demographic data and intentions to engage in community service and community service learning were investigated to provide evidence of validity.

Analyses and Results

Reliability Analysis

In order to perform the reliability analyses on the scales, item analyses were conducted on the pilot questions. Each step of the model (as presented in Table 2) was analyzed as a separate scale. Items with item-total correlations of .30 and above were selected to be included in the final version of the survey. These are the items that correlate highest with the total score on the scale, indicating that they fit on that scale. This is consistent with the procedure recommended by Nunnally and Bernstein (1994) for construct validation research. Original survey items (and coefficient alphas) are presented in Table 2, including the two dependent variables, intentions to engage in community service learning, and intentions to engage in community service.

Table 2 also presents the item statistics for the final version of each scale. Reported for each scale are the mean and standard deviation of each item, item-scale correlations, and coefficient alphas for each revised scale. Alphas indicate item homogeneity for each scale. Alpha levels above .70 show modest reliability, acceptable for early stages of research (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). Six of the helping scales (connectedness, norms, empathy, costs, benefits, and desire) show alpha levels at or above .80, and the remaining five (awareness, actions, ability, seriousness, and responsibility) range from .54 to .67. These scales have only two to five items per scale, which contributed to the lower alphas. The six scales with alphas above .80 had six to ten items each.

Additional analysis of the scales was performed. Table 3 presents the means and standard deviations of the eleven scales and the correlation matrix of the scales. The correlations show the extent of overlap of the scales. Most of the scales show considerable overlap.

Validity Analysis

A variety of validity evidence is presented. Relationships of the scales to demographic variables, including age, sex, race, college rank, major, and previous community service experience, are given in Table 4. There is no substantial relationship of age, race, rank, or major to the scales. However, female students show a consistent tendency to score higher on most of the

scales. Additionally, previous community service experience is positively related to score on most of the scales.

Relationships of the scales to intentions to engage in community service are presented in Table 5. All scales correlate positively (except costs, which is a negative scale) with intentions to engage in community service and community service learning. The relationships of the scales to previous community service experience and to intentions to engage in community service show that the scales are tapping into constructs related to community service. The relationships of the scales to gender, although interesting, do pose a problem. Ideally the scales would work the same for males and females. If these scales are used for purposes such as selection into a service-learning program, or prediction of future behavior, they have a different meaning for males and females. Further development of the scales will be needed to identify items that do not show a gender bias.

Discussion

Schwartz' process model of helping behavior is useful as a framework for understanding how people decide to become involved in community service, and what types of interventions can increase participation in community service. A thorough and comprehensive understanding of the antecedents, correlates, and consequences of community service is needed. Researchers have investigated a wide variety of motivators such as costs and benefits (Irvine, Biglan, Duncan & Metzler, 1996; Wandersman, Florin, Friedmann & Meier, 1987;), self-efficacy (Eden & Kinnar, 1991; Hofstetter, Sallis & Hovell, 1990), and other dispositional characteristics that are predictive of volunteering and helping (Clary & Orenstein, 1991; McClintock & Allison, 1989). The helping behavior model used in this study shows promise as a way to integrate these various perspectives into a comprehensive theory of volunteerism and community service.

With refinement and further research, it is hoped that the scales presented here will be useful to university administrators and faculty, policy makers, and researchers who are interested in learning more about the antecedents and outcomes of community service learning. Further development of these scales is currently being conducted in a research project this spring. In their final form, the scales will help inform and increase researchers' and educators' understanding of

students' attitudes toward community service projects performed for college credit, or as a course requirement. They can also be used to evaluate and predict the multitude of outcomes that have been proposed, such as the impact of community service experiences on students' academic achievement, social growth, character development, civic responsibility, career interests, skill development, moral and ego development, intellectual development, self-concept, and on the broader community (Kraft & Krug, 1994; Markus, Howard & King, 1993). It is hoped that educators, researchers, and policy makers will find attitude scales such as these useful for understanding students' attitudes towards community service.

References

Ajzen, I. (1988). Attitudes, personality, and behavior. Chicago: The Dorsey Press.

Clary, E.G. & Orenstein, L. (1991). The amount and effectiveness of help: The relationship of motives and abilities to helping behavior. Personality & Social Psychology, 17, 58-64.

Cohen, J. (1994). Matching university mission with service motivation: Do the accomplishments of community service match the claims? Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning, 1, 98-104.

Eden, D. & Kinnar, J. (1991). Modeling Galatea: Boosting self-efficacy to increase volunteering. Journal of Applied Psychology, 76, 770-780.

Hofstetter, C.R., Sallis, J.F. & Hovell, M.F. (1990). Some health dimensions of self-efficacy: Analysis of theoretical specificity. Social Science & Medicine, 31, 1051-1056.

Irvine, A.B., Biglan, A., Duncan, T. & Metzler, C.W. (1996). Benefits and barriers for volunteer leaders of a parent training program. Family & Community Health, 18, 20-32.

Kraft, R. J. & Krug, J. (1994). Review of research and evaluation on service learning in public and higher education. In R. J. Kraft & M. Swadener (Eds.), Building community: Service learning in the academic disciplines. (pp. 199-213). Denver: Colorado Campus Compact.

Markus, G. B., Howard, J. P. F. & King, D. C. (1993). Integrating community service and classroom instruction enhances learning: Results from an experiment. Educational evaluation and policy analysis, 15, 410-419.

McCarthy, A.M. & Tucker, M. L. (1997). Understanding student perceptions as a first step toward effective implementation of community service learning. Manuscript submitted for publication.

McCarthy, A.M. & Tucker, M. L. (1998). Encouraging volunteerism through service-learning pedagogy. Manuscript submitted for presentation, Academy of Management, Management Education and Development, San Diego.

McClintock, C.G. & Allison, S.T. (1989). Social value orientation and helping behavior. Journal of Applied Social Psychology, 19, 353-362.

Nunnally, J.C. & Bernstein, I.H. (1994). Psychometric Theory, 3rd ed. NY: McGraw-Hill.

Schwartz, S. H. (1977). Normative influences on altruism. In L. Berkowitz (Ed.), Advances in experimental social psychology, 10, 221-279. New York: Academic Press.

Smith, M.W. (1994). Community service learning: Striking the chord of citizenship. Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning, 1, 37-43.

Wandersman, A., Florin, P., Friedmann, R. & Meier, R. (1987). Who participates, who does not, and why? An analysis of voluntary neighborhood organizations in the United States and Israel. Sociological Forum, 2, 534-555.

Zlotkowski, E. (1996). Opportunity for all: Linking service-learning and business education. Journal of Business Ethics, 15, 5-19.

Table 1

Demographic Profile of Sample

Characteristic		Percent*
Age		
	18 - 20	5
	20-29	88
	30-39	4
	40 and above	3
Race		
	African-American	1
	Hispanic	4
	Native American	1
	Asian	3
	Multi-Racial	1
	White	90
	Other	1
Sex		
	Female	44
	Male	56
College Rank		
	Freshman	1
	Sophomore	17
	Junior	38
	Senior	42
	Graduate	2
Previous Community Service Experience		
	Yes	84
	No	16
Major		
	Business	77
	Non-Business	23

n=437
*Percentages may not sum to 100 because of rounding

Table 2

Scale Items, Internal Consistency Reliabilities, Descriptive Statistics, and Item-Total Correlations

PHASE I: Perceptions

AWARENESS original scale alpha = .45 final scale alpha = .67	Item Mean	Item S.D.	Item-Scale Correlation
Our elementary education system needs good volunteers	2.03	0.87	.43
Why should I do this? Americans pay taxes to support community projects [a]	2.05	0.93	.56
Community service is something I usually don't think about [a]	2.94	1.08	.46
America may not be perfect, but the American way has brought us about as close as human beings can get to a perfect society [b]			

ACTIONS original scale alpha = .24 final scale alpha = .59	Item Mean	Item S.D.	Item-Scale Correlation
I am starting to understand that volunteer work at local agencies will not solve most social problems [a]	2.99	0.86	.42
I am starting to realize that many volunteer organizations simply put "Band-Aids" over social problems, rather than change them [a]	2.91	0.93	.42
Community service helps people who cannot help themselves [b]			

ABILITY original scale alpha = .43 final scale alpha = .54	Item Mean	Item S.D.	Item-Scale Correlation
I am good at helping people	1.80	0.71	.34
I would like to volunteer for community service, but I do not know where to go to find out about such activities [b]			
I would volunteer for community service, but I do not feel that I have any skills to contribute that would be useful [a]	1.81	0.88	.21
When I am working at a job, I expect to be able to do well at it	1.60	0.75	.33
If I had a job which involved many different tasks, some easy and some difficult, I would probably do very well at almost all of them	1.79	0.77	.34
My engaging in community service on a monthly basis is (Under my control) (Dependent on other people/events) [b]			
My engaging in community service on a monthly basis is (Up to me) (Not up to me) [b]			
My engaging in community service activities makes me feel (Confident) (Terrified)	1.81	0.77	.30

PHASE IV: Helping

DESIRE (original scale alpha = .80; final scale alpha = .80)	Item Mean	Item S.D.	Item-Scale Correlation
I want to work in a company that promotes community service	2.00	0.84	.59
I want to work in a career helping others	2.32	0.92	.53
Careers in service to others can be more rewarding than other careers	2.37	0.94	.40
I believe that it is appropriate for companies to require their employees to participate in Community Service Activities	3.08	1.08	.55
Students should be required to participate in Community Service activities for course credit	3.10	1.19	.53
I seek out opportunities to perform community service	3.07	0.95	.43
It never occurred to me to volunteer for community service [a] [b]			
Doing community service will make me a stronger job candidate	1.87	0.91	.43
More companies are expecting employees to participate in community service as a part of their job	2.40	1.07	.45
I believe a community service learning project would be a waste of class time [a]	2.17	1.07	.48
Nothing would encourage me to become active in community service [a]	1.92	0.88	.39

DEPENDENT VARIABLES: Intentions

INTENTION TO ENGAGE IN COMMUNITY SERVICE LEARNING (alpha = .73)

I will seek out courses with a service learning component

Would you seek out a class with a community service learning component (Very Likely) (Very Unlikely)

INTENTION TO ENGAGE IN COMMUNITY SERVICE (alpha = .75)

I will seek out opportunities to engage in community service after I graduate

I will participate in community service programs while I am in school

Would you seek out an opportunity to perform community service (Very Likely) (Very Unlikely)

[a] Items which were reverse-scored

[b] Items which were dropped for the final scales

Table 3

Correlation Coefficients for Community Service Attitudes Scales

	AWARENESS	ACTIONS	ABILITY	CONNECTED	NORMS	EMPATHY	COSTS	BENEFITS	SERIOUSNESS	RESPON.	DESIRE
ACTIONS	.2550**	1.0									
ABILITY	.3965**	.1760**	1.0								
CONNECTED	.6511**	.1903**	.4716**	1.0							
NORMS	.5771**	.1455*	.5163**	.8198**	1.0						
EMPATHY	.3886**	.0484	.2881**	.5924**	.5179**	1.0					
COSTS	-.3797**	-.2390**	-.1209*	-.2365**	-.2573**	-.0694	1.0				
BENEFITS	.5216**	.1593*	.5453**	.7054**	.8537**	.4195**	-.2916**	1.0			
SERIOUSNESS	.2964**	.0928	.1559*	.4391**	.3788**	.3839**	-.1197*	.2495**	1.0		
RESPON.	.5563**	.1267*	.3654**	.5134**	.4762**	.3199**	-.2558**	.4633**	.1427*	1.0	
DESIRE	.6289**	.2389**	.3953**	.7331**	.6302**	.5161**	-.3208**	.5676**	.4322**	.4957**	1.0
M	2.34	2.96	1.76	2.04	1.90	2.32	2.74	1.80	2.74	2.01	2.44
SD	.75	.75	.46	.50	.55	.66	.70	.59	.88	.64	.58

* p<.05 **p<.001

Table 4

Correlations of Community Service Attitudes Scales with Demographic Variables

	Age	Sex	Race	Rank	Major	Previous Community Service
Awareness	-.0296	.2515***	.0525	.0006	.0451	.2223***
Actions	.0565	.0500	.0173	.1110*	-.0258	.0756
Ability	.0605	.1369**	.0127	.0670	.0016	.1627**
Connected	-.0016	.2492***	.0558	.0413	.0893	.1412**
Norms	.0896	.2401***	.0515	.1077*	.0253	.1115*
Empathy	-.0156	.2271***	.0535	.0063	.0440	.0743
Costs	-.0364	-.0756	.0620	-.0784	-.1330**	-.1653**
Benefits	.0777	.2692***	.0209	.0662	-.0239	.0883
Seriousness	.0491	.0690	.1032*	-.0638	-.0098	.0290
Responsibility	-.0185	.1929***	.0276	-.0122	.0786	.1383**
Desire	.0284	.2621***	.0559	-.0132	.0808	.1701***

n=437
*p<.05 **p<.01 ***p<.001

Table 5

Correlations of Community Service Attitudes Scales with Dependent Measures

	CS	CSL
Awareness	.6002**	.4084**
Actions	.1732**	.1524*
Ability	.3327**	.1746**
Connected	.5915**	.4276**
Norms	.5113**	.3653**
Empathy	.3588**	.2881**
Costs	-.4356**	-.3124**
Benefits	.4966**	.3494**
Seriousness	.2219**	.3023**
Responsibility	.4441**	.2119**
Desire	.6565**	.5654**

n=437
*p<.05 **p<.001